

Suba-Mahatma Hukmi

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One of the many recipients of the Great Blessings of Satguru Ram Singh Ji was Mahatma Hukmiji. In the Namdhari history, she is known as 'Mai Hukmi' or 'Mai Mahatma' as well. She was the first in Namdhari history whose level of spirituality and commitment to Naam Simran earned her the rank of a 'Suba' of Satguruji, especially because of her tremendous efforts in spreading the Dharma in the Sikh kingdoms of Nabha, Patiala and Jind by making people the disciples of Satguru Ram Singh Ji and follow the teachings of Guru Nanak/Guru Gobind Singh Ji and thereby making them stand up to the British moguls. **Those people who valued the moguls' materialistic offerings and had abandoned Sikhism were once again reintroduced to the righteous path of freedom and the condition of enslavement under the British rule was made known to them.**

Satguru Ram Singh Ji has spread Satyuga in this Kalyuga. After Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, the feeling of being enslaved was almost touchable amongst the people. That feeling was put away by listening to His Divine Message. He taught the people the correct way to live a life and taught the Sikhs to be true in both their Dharma and Karmas (Deeds). **Even though the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is today called a 'Sikh-Raj', there was almost no noticeable or unique propagation or uplifting of Sikhism to speak of during those years.** Even though the Maharaja had donated unaccountable sums of money for the construction and maintenance of Gurdwaras and had fixed

a good amount of regular income for them, these channels of income would later, after his death, prove to have done more harm than good. It is a historical fact that the Mahants and Pujaris who had control of those Gurdwaras were using the offerings given to them for personal use and the Gurdwaras themselves were sadly being trashed. **The British exploited them even more and made them an un-ending problem in the Sikh Panth.**

Satguru Ram Singh Ji were confronted by those Pujaris in 1867 A.D., when they tried to stop Him from paying homage to the Gurdwara Kesgarhr Sahib, Sri Hari Mandir Sahib and Akal Takhat Sahib. To rectify the situation of the fallen Sikh Dharma, Satguru Ram Singh Ji had established the Sant Khalsa in 1857 A.D. and traveled from village to village, city to city, in order to wake the sleeping people up and put them on the right path of Dharma. **Killing of female infants, plural-wives, child-marriages and several other 'Kurahits' (sins) were exposed and fought against. In the year 1863 A.D. in the village Khote, six inter-caste marriages were performed and the 4 Verses from the Sri Aad Granth Sahib were recited as the new Khalsa Marriage Ceremony (Anand Karaj) was initiated for the very first time.**

The Satguru's Crusades around the country and His Message of freedom from the shackles of enslavement imposed by the British had ruined the sleeps of many Englishmen. When His Holiness were traveling in Punjab on 5th April, 1863, the deputy commissioner, Mr. McNab, had written the following, which was the first, report about Him: "From district of Ludhiana has arrived one middle-aged man called (Guru) Ram Singh. Accompanied by

roughly a hundred disciples He is traveling in the district of Sialkote. **His disciples carry wooden-clubs (Salotar) instead of guns and don't obey anyone else's commands. Among His followers are many women as well.** His entire following is estimated at about five-thousand and He will be arriving for the Vaisakhi festival in Amritsar along with them.

Hearing the report the English government's ears were raised and they passed out an order to restricted His Holiness from traveling outside of Bhaini Sahib from 1863 A.D. to 1867 A.D. During those years the responsibility of spreading His message was carried on by the Subas. Just like how Emperor Akbar had divided the country into 22 Subas to run his entire kingdom, so was the Punjab divided into 22 parts and the duty of spreading the Dharma within these parts was given to the Subas. Giani Gian Singh wrote in his Panth Parkash Granth as follow:

Thus His Holy Fame spread far and wide; those who came to weigh, found Him full and became His disciples. He had a huge following of no less than three-hundred-thousand of people from Malwa, Doaba, Majha and Pothohar. Like Akbar, the Emperor, He appointed twenty-two Governors known as Subas and blessed them with speech as effective as His own. Men and Women would form themselves into choirs, play drums and melodiously chant the Supreme Word of the Guru. His Subas spread His Message not only within Punjab and India but even reached out to foreign countries in order to make Satguru Ram Singh Ji's Mission better known. Likewise was Satguru Ram Singh Ji's Suba, **Bibi Hukmiji (Mahatma Hukmi) upon whom was the unique blessing of the Satguru.**

From among the women-folk, she was the first to be given the honour of serving as a Suba.

Birth and Childhood-

Bibi Hukmi were born in the village Variah, district Amritsar, near Tarn-Taran, to Sardar Rattan Singh. Sardar Rattan Singh was a Gurmukh. The entire family, for that matter, was that of Gurmukhs. Rattan Singh's son was called Naina Singh. It was Rattan Singh's dream to see both his son and daughter brought up as saintly figures. Hence, to fulfill his dreams, Rattan Singh sent his daughter Bibi Hukmi to the Dharamsala of a Sant called Mishra Singh.

At Dera Baba Mishra Singh, Bibiji learnt the Vedas and many other Hindu-Granth. There she also acquired immense knowledge about the Hindu Scriptures and the teachings of Guru Nanak as well. **Then she came in contact with a female Saint called Charan Kaur and reached a new level in her spirituality.** She did not live the Grehsath (Married) way of life her entire life. Even though she was married by her parents at the age of eleven, she became a widow that very same year.

Becoming disciple of Satguru Ram Singh Ji-

Although Bibi Hukmi was given a Mantra to recite and was a learnt person in the field of Hindu Granths and Dharma by reading the Vedas, yet her mind was not yet at peace. Her mind was seeking the True Guru. Out of Dera Baba Mishra Singh, she came in contact with

numerous Sadhus and Sants but no where did her mind find its niche. Right about that time in Punjab, Satyuga was being spread by Satguru Ram Singh Ji. The patriots traveled from everywhere to Sri Bhaini Sahib and upon becoming Sant Khalsa, they traveled everywhere with the slogan "Bhaini Satguru Jagia, Hore Koorhr Jahana |". ("The Satguru Appeared In Bhaini, The Rest Of The World Is Rubbish.")

Bibi Hukmiji's wish was soon to be fulfilled. Her mind was already cleansed; all that was left was the presence of `Naam'. First her father, Sant Rattan Singh, was blessed and became a Namdhari Singh, then her brother Naina Singh and finally Bibiji, all became Namdharis. Their minds were settled as they recited the Naam with every breath. Bibi Hukmiji partook the Amrit and her name was changed to Hukam Kaur. She gave up feminine clothing and started wearing men's attire and traveled from village to village in order to spread Gurmat (The Message of the Satguru). Satguru Ram Singh Ji were very pleased to hear about her deeds and on the occasion of Diwali in Amritsar in 1867 A.D., Mahatma Hukmiji was given the title of `Suba'. The well known historian Prof. Jaswant Singh Jas's book called "Baba Ram Singh Namdhari" says the following about this incident on page 65:

"During this occasion of Diwali in Amritsar (October 1867 A.D.), the uniqueness was that in the Namdhari Panth, women were encouraged to do Parchar. **A teenager daughter of a farmer Rattan Singh from village Variah, called Bibi Hukmi, was given the title of a Suba so that she could control a following of women-folk, just like how the men Subas did and so**

that she could travel to different villages to convert people to Amritdhari."

At that time, she was about twenty years old. With the title of Suba also came more responsibilities for Bibi Hukmi, however, she remained committed to her mission and kept on progressing further. Along with spreading the Dharma, she also taught the women-folk Gurmukhi and made them strong students of Gurbani. During those days there was no place for women in society. The Sikhs had adopted the practice of 'Sati' (cremation of live female widows) like the fallen Hindus. Evidently when Maharaja Ranjit Singh died, many of his wives were also burnt along with his body. Similarly, killing of female infant was also wide-spread. Satguru Ram Singh Ji had raised His Voice against these practices which are also evident in His Hukamnamas. Bibi Hukmi had put the teachings of the Satguru into practice and travelled to many villages with a Jatha (Group) of women-folk in order to spread the Message of Gursikhi.

During the Time of Satguru Hari Singh Ji:-

The Era of Satguru Hari Singh Ji is known in the Namdhari Panth as one of the most challenging and testing of all. On the morning of 18th June, 1872 A.D., Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji were sent to exile by the English government. Cruel punishment was imposed on the Namdhari population and the Gurdwara Sri Bhaini Sahib. The Gurdwara was heavily scrutinized, every square inch searched, and a police post was constructed in front of It.

At the time when the Satguru went into exile, Bibi Hukmi was present at Sri Bhaini Sahib. The next day, the entire Sangat that was present at Sri Bhaini Sahib was taken to Ludhiana and kept under the police's watch for sometime. Bibi Hukmi too was detained at Ludhiana. From Ludhiana, Bibiji were taken to Amritsar. For sometime she was imprisoned in a jail there but was later detained in her own village of origin, Variah, where she had to report to the police station daily. Even there, Bibiji accepted the Satguru's Bhana (Will) and kept on teaching Gurmukhi, recitation of the Scriptures and kept preaching the Dharma.

Once Sant Bachan Singh of village Bhumavdi (Nabha) came to visit Bibi Hukmiji at Variah and told her about the cruel punishment that had been carried on by the British on the Namdhari population at Bhaini Sahib. The police was torturing the Sangat. No more than five Namdharis were allowed to gather anywhere. Once a person had Darshan (Sight) of the Gurdwara, he was restricted from returning until six more months have expired. The Sangat that went to have Darshan of the Gurdwara were punished severely. **No Namdhari was allowed to recite the Sri Aad Granth Sahib. If they were seen doing Akhand Path anywhere at all, the very land upon which the Path (Recitation of Gurbani) was being done would be evicted and looted by the government because the Kukas pray for the end of the British rule every time they do Ardas (The Sikh Common Prayer).** Countless Namdharis faced these punishments without a frown on their forehead.

Listening to Sant Bachan Singh inspired Suba Hukmiji and she at once got on her horse without thinking twice about the British's imposed punishments and traveled throughout Patiala, Nabha and Jind to spread the anti-British notion to the masses. For two years she travelled through villages and made them stand up to the British. Soon enough, the government too found out about her activities and police sepoy were deployed to follow her. All her belongings, including her horse, were confiscated and she was summoned to the court at Firozpur.

Mahatma Hukmi in the Jail of Firozpur:-

At that time, the prisons of the British were no different than hell. No care was given to cleanliness whatsoever. The bread given as food was literally mixed with soil and the side dish with pebbles. The prison officials were no less harsh themselves. Their hearts were made of stone. They were without any moral value let alone any compassion. They presented themselves as butchers before the prisoners. The court of the British had no justice. The court was theirs and so was the verdict. When Bibi Hukmiji was brought to the trial, she was sentenced to two years of imprisonment. **But Bibiji was not at all afraid; she accepted the imprisonment as the Bhana of the Satguru as well. She had started her Jap Paryog (Continuous recitation of Naam) right in the prison. At 2.30 in the morning she would rise, go to the well to do Ishnaan (Take Bath) and then begin her Naam Simran and fearlessly does the Jaap (loud pronunciation of God's Name) of the Satguru. Once an officer, Mr. Berne, came to have a look**

at the jail and saw a four feet long black snake lurking in the prison cell where Bibiji were doing Naam Simran. The snake went atop Bibiji's head and then returned to the ground before disappearing out from an opening near the door.

Similarly, once the official in charge of the jail, Mr. Moore, became drunk and seeing Bibiji alone in the prison cell, his mind became polluted. But just as he entered through the door into the cell, he felt as if he was bitten by a snake and had to make a run for his life out of there.

Moreover, whatever Bibi said would turn out to be true. Once an inmate who was plagued by some disease was also restored to health by Bibiji's bachan (word).

Many times during the night the officers in charge of the jail would hear noises although no one was around. With all these strange occurring, Mr. Berne sent a report to the Governor and D.C. of Punjab and Bibiji's sentence was reduced and finally removed. Freed from imprisonment, Bibiji travelled directly to Mata Juala Devi at Amritsar and once again started preaching the Dharma.

Bibiji blessing Maharaja of Nabha with a son:-

In 1906 A.D. Satguru Hari Singh Ji merged with the Divine Light (Joti Jote) and the Great Virtuous Satguru Partap Singh Ji's Era began. The torture imposed by the British on the Namdharis had slightly lessened. The Maharajas and the Englishmen's stooges' treatment of the Namdharis had also become somewhat less harsh. Bibi

Hukmiji along with Mai Gurdei Khudi Valia went to preach the Dharma in Nabha. The Maharaja of Nabha, Maharaja Ripudman Singh, had no male offspring. Bibiji told him that his house will be blessed with a son if the Maharaja takes the Bhajan (Gurmantra/Naam) of the Barveh Patshah (Twelfth King) Satguru Ram Singh Ji and recite Ardas of Bara Patshahia daily.

The Maharaja agreed to do so and after sometime Maharani Sarojni Devi became pregnant. The Maharaja called upon an English doctor to give his wife a check-up. She told him that the unborn fetus was female. This news also reached Mahatma Hukmiji. Bibiji rejected the English doctor's claim. She proclaimed that her Satguru's Bachan can never be unfulfilled. Not much longer, the child was born, and the English doctor's prediction was proven wrong. Maharaja Ripudman Singh was elated. He paid homage to the Satguru with land and a Rolls Royce car. He also made offerings of several Bastar (Clothing items) to the Satguru and the Sadh Sangat.

At that time the singh sabha's news papers had started to make big news out of this and 'accused' him of being a Namdhari. Learning this, the Maharaja gave an answer with an exclamation that was published in the Satjug newspaper during that time:-

"Being a Namdhari is neither a crime nor a sin,
I am a priest of Bhaini Sahib.
Lacs of times I'd say, thousands of times I'd say,
A TRUE NAMDHARI I AM,
A TRUE NAMDHARI I AM!"

To drive the Rolls Royce car, the Maharaja had also sent a driver called Duman Singh for this service. As such, Mahatma Hukmiji had done so much for the sake of doing Parchar (Preaching). With her words she put away numerous people's ailments and sorrows. Near the Parliament in India today, there's also a road called "Bibi Hukmi Road" that was named after her. Her name has become immortal in our history.

(Originally written by Devinder Singh Gil)